



UNITED STATES ARMY PARACHUTE TEAM GOLDEN KNIGHTS MEDIA RELEASE 01-05



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KNIGHTS

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Being the goodwill ambassadors for the U.S. Army is a big job, one the U.S. Army Parachute Team, "Golden Knights" thrives on. Soldiers on the Golden Knights do their best work at 12,500 feet above the earth's surface, racing to the ground at speeds in excess of 120 mph and landing with smiles, ready to do it all again, in front of 20,000 spectators.

For more than 44 years the U. S. Army Parachute Team has been entertaining both young and old with precision parachute demonstrations.

In order to compete in the then communist dominated sport of skydiving the 13-man Strategic Army Corps Sport Parachute Team was created in 1959. The parachute team performed so well that on June 1, 1961 the Army officially recognized, designated and activated the team as the U.S. Army Parachute Team.

A year later the team adopted its nickname, "Golden Knights." Golden, signifies the Team's reputation of bringing home gold medals from skydiving competitions. Knights, indicate the team had "conquered the skies: and alludes to the fact that Team members are champions of principle and conquest.

The team earned a title of the Army's goodwill ambassadors to the world, by proving time and again that they are the best in the world.

The Golden Knights have performed more than 14,000 shows in all 50 states and 48 countries. Annually the Team performs more than 27,000 jumps before an estimated 12 million people.

The Golden Knights have a three-fold mission 1) to perform aerial demonstrations to the public and promote the Army and its recruitment effort, 2) to compete in national and international parachuting competitions and 3) test and evaluate new parachuting equipment and techniques for improved operations and safety.



College Station, Texas - Former President George H.W. Bush, seen center bottom, is seen here doing his second tandem with the Golden Knights in honor of his 80th Birthday Celebration. Flying with Bush is Sergeant 1st Class Ken Brown, Staff Sergeant Bryan Schnell, Sergeant 1st Class Kurt Isenbarger and in the back is Sergeant Major Michael Eitnhear.

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The Team is composed of five sections: two demonstration teams, the Black and Gold Demonstration Teams, the two competition teams, the Style and Accuracy Team and the Freefall Formation Team and the Tandem Team.

In addition to the freefall parachutists the team also has an aviation section, affectionately referred to as “Team Six” and the Headquarters element consisting of administration, operations, budget, media relations, parachute maintenance and supply.

The Black and Gold Teams perform two different shows, the Full Show and the Mass Exit. Both shows begin with one jumper exiting the aircraft at 12,500 feet and flying in the national colors. Once on the ground, he or she will then narrate for the duration of the show.

The full show consists of four maneuvers. The first being the baton pass: two jumpers exit the aircraft, meet in freefall and exchange a wooden baton, demonstrating the jump-



Gary Ind., - Sergeant 1st Class Harold Meyers, Demonstrator, Gold Demonstration Team, spirals toward his landing area with a smoke chain attached to his ankle, creating a beautiful spectacle for the crowds at this show. Demonstrators travel all over the country wowing the fans and telling the Army story.



Yuma, Ariz., - Sergeant 1st Class Dan Moesch, Team Leader, Black Demonstration Team, U.S. Army Parachute Team, “Golden Knights”, packs his parachute with the help of some local second graders. Demonstrators pack their parachutes on show site, giving the public the opportunity to ask them questions about skydiving and the Army.

ers control of flight while falling at 120 mph.

Next is the intentional cutaway maneuver, where

a single jumper demonstrates what would happen if his parachute malfunctioned. The intentional cutaway is the only solo maneuver of the show, but one of the most exciting.

The third maneuver is the diamond track. It is used to demonstrate the incredible amount of lateral movement a jumper can achieve while in freefall.

The final maneuver is the diamond formation. Four jumpers exit the aircraft separately and fly their bodies to within inches of each other; forming a diamond in the sky, yet never making contact. At the team leader’s signal the jumpers will separate, streak to the four points of the compass creating a beautiful bomb-burst effect, open their parachutes and fly safely to the ground.

The mass exit show has all jumpers exiting the aircraft and simultaneously performing one of many geometrical formations in the sky. Once the parachutes open the jumpers, land on target one-by-one.

The parachute competition teams, the Style and Accuracy Team, and the formation freefall team, circle the globe competing in parachuting competitions and -more-

fascinating the skydiving world with their record of 423 national champions, 66 world champions, 20 national and seven world team titles. In addition to those accomplishments the team claims the only six-time world champion parachutist in formation skydiving.

These impressive achievements have made them not only the most successful U.S. Department of Defense sports team, but also the most successful parachute team in the world.

“I see them being the team to beat in the future. With what they have learned over the years and the abilities of our new soldiers we will again become a competition skydiving super power again,” said Sergeant Major Michael Eitniear, Sergeant Major of the Golden Knights.

In its sixth, year the Tandem Orientation Program, (TOP) has brought the American Public closer to the Army and the sport of skydiving.

“The tandem team enables the Army to reach out to influential citizens and give them a taste of the professionalism, leadership and teamwork that is involved in giving them a tandem,”

said Lt. Colonel Dave Standridge, Commander, U.S. Army Parachute Team, “Golden Knights”. “This will hopefully result in a positive impression of the Army and encourage them to tell our young citizens about the many opportunities available.”

The aviation section is the backbone of the parachute team. Those Soldiers ensure the teams arrive safely to their destinations and use their aircraft as jump platforms for shows. The pilot and crew members accomplish these important missions using a fleet of four aircraft and some of the best Army aviators.

The Headquarters section provides support for the team. These duties include show scheduling,



Krems, Austria - the U.S. Womens Military Style and Accuracy Team, Stacey Shorzman, Angela Nichols, Elisa Feldt and Karen Morrison take a few moments to “dirt dive” or practice their formation structures prior to the final round of the relative work competition. This team ended up breaking the current world record for the military world meet and winning the Gold Medal in Freefall formation skydiving.



Yuma, Ariz., - Sergeant Misha Stahlberg, Sergeant 1st Class Jason Berentis and Sergeant 1st Class Harold Meyers sign autographs for local Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps students. This is a key aspect of their job as Golden Knights by interacting with the public and local recruiters on showsite to let the American youth know about the opportunities available to them in the Army.



administrations, finance, supply, parachute maintenance and media relations.

The headquarters mission enables the demonstrators and competitors to concentrate on putting on great shows and bringing home the gold.

A soldier who wants to become a Golden Knight must first apply to attend the Assessment and Selection Program. Selection is held every year at the Team's home, Fort Bragg, N.C. Any enlisted Soldier can apply, however, only

those who meet the demanding qualifications are selected.

All applicants must volunteer, have a minimum of 150 freefall parachute jumps, have a flawless military and civilian record and be willing to attend the Army's Airborne School, if necessary.

The six week Assessment and Selection Program tests parachuting skills, challenges the physical, mental and emotional states of the candidates and builds teamwork to help identify the best Soldiers for the team.

The Knights are very selective in order, "to ensure we accept the right soldier to accomplish our mission. The wrong soldier could seriously damage the prestige and reputation of the Army," said Standridge.

The Army offers up to \$50,000 for college up to \$65,000 for college loan repayment, and signing bonuses up to \$20,000 for qualified enlistees. Aside from the financial benefits the Army has to offer it also offers skills and experience in more than 200 job specialties.

An "Army of One" begins with each individual. Soldiers develop qualities and experience in high-tech equipment that employer's look for in job candidates.

Being a Soldier strengthens you today and for the future because the Army develops your potential through relevant and challenging training, shared values and personal experience. Soldiers consistently take pride in making a difference for themselves, their families and the nation.

"The Officers and Soldiers of this unit have one common goal to be the best at what we do and spread the Army message to everyone we meet," said Eitnietar.



Krems, Austria - Sergeant Larry Miller, Freefall Videographer for the U.S. Military Skydiving Team swoops in for his landing after the second relative work jump for the men's team at the 31st Military World Meet. Judges at the meet score the jump based on the information on Millers cameras. If Miller does not get the entire formation throughout the skydive the team will lose points.